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HINTS TO CHINA-PAINTERS.

XIX.—THE USE OF METALLIC PAINTS UPON PORCELAIN.



PREVIOUS article treated of the preparation of metals for use upon porcelain, but as considerable difficulty is sometimes experienced in the application of the metals thus prepared, some suggestions as to the proper manner of using paint made from gold or other metals

may be of use. Amateurs often hesitate to attempt the decoration of porcelain with metals from the idea

that they are more difficult to use than the common colors. This fear is groundless, as with ordinary care, added to the requisite degree of skill in the use of the brush, anyone may soon learn to apply the metallic paints with success. To describe fine lines or bands as borders, either in colors or gold, is difficult, and skill in this branch of decoration, merely mechanical as it is, can only be acquired by much practice. But, after all, formal bands or lines are seldom needed in artistic decoration, and if a simple edge of gold is required it can be managed by the aid of a decorator's wheel, which can be procured of any dealer in artists' materials, and should always form part of the furniture of the china painter's table. For describing such edges and for all lines in decoration, a slender camel's-hair brush with hairs all of the same

length, called a tracer or lining brush, should be used. These brushes can be procured of various sizes, according to the width of line desired.

Of the various metals that can be used by the decorator of porcelain, gold is the most important in a decorative point of view, as well as the most generally useful. I have described the best method of preparing gold,* and I would advise the china-painter to have gold prepared in this manner for all fine work. It is much handsomer as well as more durable than the

gold ordinarily used. As the poorer quality of gold generally requires a second application to produce a satisfactory gilding, the better quality will not be found more expensive in the end. It is best to keep the prepared gold in the form of powder, which can be rubbed down with a little fat oil, to which enough spirits of turpentine is added to reduce it to the proper consistency when it is to be used. Having the paint of the proper thinness is a very nice point in the application of gold. If made too thin by an excess of turpentine the amount of gold laid upon the surface of the china will be insufficient to produce a solid gilding. Neither should too much fat oil be used, but just enough to cause the paint to go on smoothly and to adhere to the porcelain. It might even be used

In many cases it is more beautiful unburnished, or a combination of dead and burnished gold may add much to the decorative effect. If it is intended that the gold shall be left with a dead surface, it must be fired at a higher degree of heat than the ordinary temperature. When fired it can be rubbed with chamois-skin and with powder such as that used in polishing silver. If the gold rubs off when an attempt is made to polish or burnish it, it shows that the fire was too weak to fix it upon the surface, and the piece must be refired. If a finish less brilliant than burnished gold and with a greater degree of polish than dead gold is desired, the decoration can be burnished and the piece refired and left with the polish with which it comes from the kiln. Designs may be

painted upon china with a raising preparation and afterward gilded, as, for instance, a pattern of conventional fleur-de-lis or a geometrical pattern of dots and figures. The gilding should not in this case be burnished. After the raising preparation is applied to the piece it should be fired before being gilded.

There is another preparation of gold in common use, called bright gold, which, although inferior in quality and appearance to the gold mentioned above, yet can be used with pleasing effect upon large pieces for ornament alone, where the fine gold would be too expensive. Its cheapness and the ease with which it can be applied are recommendations which are irresistible in some cases. In pottery finished with a semi-glaze it produces a very good dead gold effect; on glazed surfaces it comes from the kiln with a rather

garish brilliancy. It is sold in bottles in a liquid state and is usually in the right condition for use when procured. If too thin, a portion can be poured out upon a saucer a short time before it is to be used. Exposed to the air it soon dries. When just beginning to thicken it is in excellent condition to work with. When it becomes too thick, as it soon will in a warm room, it can be thinned with spirits of turpentine. It is not well to introduce the turpentine into the mixture with the brush, however, but a very small quantity of turpentine should be taken upon the palette knife and rubbed well into the gold, so that it shall be evenly



DESIGN FOR A PLAQUE.

AFTER A CLOISONNÉ PLATE BY TH. DECK IN THE LIMOGES MUSEUM.

without fat oil, but it would not work quite so smoothly and would also rub off easily when dry, so that there would be danger that the decoration might be injured in the necessary handling before firing.

It is best, therefore, to mix the gold powder, just before using, with a very small quantity of fat oil and just enough spirits of turpentine to render it possible to lay it on smoothly, and in laying it on to be careful to cover the surface thickly enough to prevent the china showing through after it is fired. After firing the gold appears dead and must then be rubbed with an agate burnisher if a more brilliant effect is desired.

* See THE ART AMATEUR for February, 1883.

diluted. If too much turpentine is introduced into it the paint will spread in a very alarming manner upon its application to the porcelain, making a broad and ragged line. When this happens, wipe off the part of the work thus injured, and either wait until the gold has begun to thicken before commencing again, or give it more body by adding some of the thicker liquid from the bottle. Bright gold should be laid on with a uniform thickness throughout, but need not be applied as thickly as the other gold, as a rather light application of it will produce an astonishingly brilliant effect on firing. Applied in a very thin wash bright gold will produce the rose-colored "lustre," with which, indeed, it is identical.

Silver and other metals are used in the decoration of porcelain in the same manner as gold. Bronzes of various colors are prepared by Hancock & Sons which can be used with gold, silver, and colors with very pleasing effects. Of these a dark bronze of an olive hue, and also the green and red bronzes, are very good. They come from the firing with a dead surface, which may be burnished, if a polish is desired, in the same manner as gold.

M. LOUISE McLAUGHLIN.

WILLIAM MORRIS'S VIEWS ABOUT POTTERY.

IN his lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life," William Morris takes a truly pessimist view of the condition, past and present, of modern pottery. He speaks of the influence of the Chinese upon European potters as "the instrument which finally made nonsense of the whole craft among us." It corrupted our forefathers, according to Mr. Morris's view, by its grosser and more material qualities—as he calls them: the whiteness of the paste, the hardness of the glaze, the neatness of the painting. These, he says, "were indeed valuable qualities in the hands of a Chinaman, deft as he was of execution, fertile of design, fanciful though not imaginative—in short, a born maker of pretty toys; but such daintinesses were of little avail to a good workman of our race—eager, impatient, imaginative, with something of melancholy or moroseness even in his sport, his very jokes two-edged and fierce; he had other work to do, if his employers but knew it, than the making of toys." The result was, according to our author, the production of "most useful sets of works of art" at Meissen, Sèvres, Chelsea, Derby, and in Staffordshire; of which he finds those of Sèvres "the most repulsively hideous," those of Meissen, at their worst, "the most barbarous," and those made in England "the stupidest, though it may be the least ugly." As to the state of pottery in the present day, Mr. Morris's term for it is "styleless

anarchy;" but this he considers not so hopeless a state of things as that in the last century, since it shows a certain uneasiness as to whether we are right or wrong, which may be a sign of life. Nevertheless, as regards art, the craft which turns out such tons of commercial wares, every piece of which ought to be a work of art (we adopt the writer's language), produces

the head of pottery works" who are anxious to better it. He thinks, however, the impetus for reform must come from those who demand, and by way of guiding the public to a correct taste in such matters he lays down the following canons:

"1. No vessel should be fashioned by being pressed into a mould that can be made by throwing on the wheel, or otherwise by hand.

2. All vessels should be finished on the wheel, not turned in a lathe, as is now the custom. How can you expect to have good workmen when they know that whatever surface their hands may put on the work will be taken off by a machine?

3. It follows, as a corollary to the last point, that we must not demand excessive neatness in pottery, and this more especially in cheap wares. Workmanlike finish is necessary, but finish to be workmanlike must always be in proportion to the kind of work. What we get in pottery at present is mechanical finish, not workmanlike, and is as easy to do as the other is hard; one is a matter of a manager's system, the other comes of constant thought and trouble on the part of the men, who by that time are artists, as we call them.

4. As to the surface decoration on pottery, it is clear it must never be printed; for the rest, it would take more than an hour to go even very briefly into the matter of painting on pottery; but one rule we have for a guide, and whatever we do if we abide by it, we are quite sure to go wrong if we reject it; and it is common to all the lesser arts. Think of your material. Don't paint anything on pottery save what can be painted only on pottery; if you do, it is clear that however good a draughtsman you may be, you do not care about that special art. You can't suppose that the Greek wall-painting was anything like their painting on pottery—there is plenty of evidence to show that it was not. Or, take another example from the Persian art; it is easy for those conversant with it to tell from an outline tracing of a design whether it was done for pottery-painting or for other work.

5. Finally, when you have asked for these qualities from the potters, and even in a very friendly way Boycotted them a little till you get them, you will of course be prepared to pay a great deal more for your pottery than you do now, even for the rough work you may have to take. I'm sure that won't hurt you; we shall only have less and break less, and our incomes will still be the same."



FAÏENCE PANEL. "LA CÉRAMIQUE."

DESIGNED BY FR. EHLMANN. EXECUTED BY TH. DECK.

almost literally nothing. We wonder what his noted countrymen of the Minton and Doulton works think of such rash assertions. While bewailing the present state of pottery, as a "dismal" one, Mr. Morris speaks of "many excellent and public-spirited men at

THAT much misused term "barbotine" is a potter's word curiously derived from the verb "barboter," which means to puddle. The French modellers give the name to the loose clay which they shake off the vessels they are moulding,

DEFECTS IN FIRED WORK.

THE beginner in china painting is frequently distressed to find his careful work spoiled in the firing, but is unable to discover what is wrong. The defects frequently arise by bad mixing of the color in two ways. If the painting has gone to the kiln with too much oil in it, it is certain that the color will blister. If it comes back with a dry powdery look, with the color scarcely adhering enough to keep itself from being rubbed off, it shows that, in working, the color has been over diluted with turpentine, though not to the extent of the grains separating. This will, probably, be the result if the ware has been sent to the kiln dry. These considerations furnish the proof of the reason for the former requirement, that for a thin tint the diluent must have a larger proportion of oil than of spirit. The remedy for the dryness is simply repainting, using a little more oil with the color, and a very little enamel glazing. The remedy for the blistering is simple, but tedious, and in practice would only be adopted if the painting were worth the trouble. Still, even if a rough piece of work has blistered, it may be worth while trying the remedy on it once just for practice. It consists in chipping off the blisters, and then rubbing down the irregularities. The chipping may be done with an old knife until a fairly smooth surface is obtained, and then with a piece of pumice stone the final smoothness is given. Of course, as the boiling up has given the work a pitted appearance, this rubbing down, if the coat of paint has been thick, may not produce a perfectly level surface, but it must remove all roughness and jaggedness. The part which had been spoiled is then repainted to match, care being taken, if a quite flat tint is wanted, to make up for any irregularities of depth of tint produced by the rubbing by lighter or heavier touches as needful.

ARTISTIC ADVANTAGES OF SOFT PORCELAIN.

IN the selection of an object in porcelain for decoration, it is desirable for the artist to choose one with soft glaze. The soft ware may be known, as a rule, by its slightly dingy and yellowish tint. It is more transparent than the other kinds and may easily be scratched with the point of a penknife. The harder the ware and the glaze, the more superficial is the latter; while the softer the ware and the more like it its glaze, the more complete and intimate is the corporation of the two. In the case of the hard ware the glaze is, strictly speaking, only *attached* to the ware, in that on the soft the flux is practically a *continuation of the glaze*. The mode in which these conditions operate upon the painting is

obvious, when it is remembered that the pigments are of a vitreous nature or are mixed with a vitreous vehicle. The harder the glaze, the more superficial and less glossy is the painting; the softer and thicker the glaze, the more deeply does the color sink into it. Aurelio De Vega, a practical china painter, commenting on these facts, says: "I have an old Augustan

with the hard glaze which appears in some spots where the color has chipped off. Compare such a work as this with a painting executed upon a piece of old Sèvres, and how striking is the difference in the appearance of the two. In the former the colors are in large part hard in appearance and dryish, and generally lack that full and perfect gloss to be found on the latter, which presents a velvety softness of look. The reason is clear. The degree of heat adapted to reduce the pigments to a proper state of fusion is insufficient to affect the hard glaze to a corresponding extent, and the paint remains on the surface and looks more or less dry. If the glaze is sufficiently hard, some colors may altogether fail to adhere, and the work of the painter, who by mistake has selected a piece with such a glaze, must be entirely thrown away. The softer glaze, on the other hand, yields to the heat sufficient to vitrify the pigments, and so these sink more or less deeply into the body of the glaze, thereby acquiring that peculiar depth and richness of tone which have given such charm and value to the old English and French wares. This very peculiarity, however, limits its range of usefulness, as it is only suitable for certain kinds of decoration in which rich and very showy colors are required to be used pure. The English glaze, from the middle position which it occupies, possesses most of the advantages of the soft, and practically none of its disadvantages, and while but little less suited than the latter for the particular work just indicated, is best adapted for every other kind of work, and is therefore to the painter an invaluable description."

It is essential to the "finish" of a picture that after the firing all the colors should be equally glossy and should have equally and completely adhered to the glaze of the ware. This end, so far as the painter is concerned, is, as a rule, to be attained by the use in any one painting of the colors of only one maker. It is the fact that there is one recognized standard of heat for firing enamel colors, and at this heat, technically known as "rose-color" heat, the color should be developed in all its perfection; but, unfortunately, it is not always the case that colors of different makers will fire properly at one heat.

CONNOISSEURS say that at a recent sale in London at Christie's, Wertheimer got a bargain in a garniture of clock and vases of old Sèvres for

which he paid £346 10s. The clock was of gros bleu in a white and gold vase, with a revolving dial of ormolu, a serpent showing the hour on a square ormolu pedestal. The vases were also white and gold, having handles formed by gilt figures of children.



FAIENCE PANEL. "LA GRAVURE."

DESIGNED BY FR. EHLMANN. EXECUTED BY TH. DECK.

(Dresden) cup and saucer, one of the colors employed in the decoration of which has absolutely no union with the underlying glaze, and is secured only by its connection with the color surrounding it. It has properly vitrified, but has not become incorporated